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ABSTRACT

Because marriage and family counselors need to examine all areas of a marital relationship, a study was undertaken to investigate several parts of a marital relationship using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). Participants (N=495) who were engaged in conjoint marital counseling, completed the MSI, a self-reporting measure with 280 true/false items. Their responses were factor analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis procedure based on tetrachoric correlations. Dichotomous variables were treated as realizations of continuous, multivariate normal data for which an ordinary factor analysis model holds. Six scales were analyzed including global distress, affective communication, problem-solving communication, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction. Results of a test performed on the latent roots obtained from the overall analysis suggested that no more than six factors were present. Examination of the six factors indicated a grouping of items similar to those described by the MSI scales. Results of this study were consistent with previous ones and provide support for both a multidimensional approach to assessing a couple's relationship and the continued use of the MSI in clinical and research settings. (ABL)

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MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASPECTS OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS:

FACTOR STRUCTURE OF THE MSI

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the presence of several dimensions of a couple's relationship using an inventory of marital interaction, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). A clinical sample of 495 individuals, all of whom were being seen for evaluation of marital difficulties, was involved in the study. Their responses on the MSI were factor analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis procedure based on tetrachoric correlations. Results indicated the presence of five broad factors similar to the MSI subscales. The existence of a number of identifiable factors argues for a multidimensional approach to assessing couples in marital therapy, and supports the continued use of the MSI in clinical and research settings.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASPECTS OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS:

FACTOR STRUCTURE OF THE MSI

There has been increased interest in recent years in the assessment and treatment of marital discord. Current trends in divorce and family disharmony have great implications for those individuals involved in marriage and family counseling, and to the clients that they serve. In order to fully assess and understand a couple's interaction, it is necessary to examine all areas of a marital relationship. The present study investigated the presence of several dimensions of a couple's relationship using a well-researched inventory of marital satisfaction.

The Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) (Snyder, 1981) is a multidimensional inventory of marital interaction. The self-report measure identifies the nature and extent of marital distress along several major dimensions. The amount and source of distress is determined separately for the husband and wife by having each spouse responding to 280 "true" or "false" items. Individual responses are scored on 11 subscales of the inventory.

Although several studies examining the reliability and validity of the instrument are reported in the test manual, only two factor analytic studies of the dimensions measured by the inventory have been reported. One such study investigated the interrelationship of the scale scores (Snyder, 1981). The other study factor analyzed the items on 3 of the 11 scales to determine if broad-band (i.e., secondary) factors were present (Snyder & Repts, 1982).

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether a

factor analytic solution based on an alternate approach than that used in the earlier studies would confirm the basic factor structure identified in these studies. The factor analysis model used here is one proposed by Muthen (1978, 1984). This approach partially addresses criticisms of some individuals (c.f., Comrey, 1973; Gorsuch, 1983; Kim & Mueller, 1978) who advocate that only continuous data be used in a factor analysis, and recommend that existing dichotomous items be either transformed into continuous variables or some alternative method used to analyze underlying test structure. Muthen's approach uses a technique similar to ordinary factor analysis, but involves tetrachoric correlations rather than Pearson correlations. This method treats dichotomous variables as realizations of continuous, multivariate normal data for which an ordinary factor analysis model holds.

In this study, a relatively large sample of 495 individuals was used. The participants were a subsample of a larger group of individuals secured as part of a nation-wide effort to provide further validity information on the instrument. All individuals were currently engaged in conjoint marital counseling. Approximately one-half of the sample were male and one-half female. Cases with missing or incomplete data were not included.

Five of the MSI scales were excluded from further examination: two of the scales dealt with questions pertaining to children and contained frequent blank items; one scale was a validity scale; and two scales were felt to deal more with past experiences of the couple rather than current concerns. The six chosen scales were:

1. Global Distress (GDS): measures the individual's overall dissatisfaction with the marriage
2. Affective Communication (AFC): assesses the individual's dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by their spouse
3. Problem-Solving Communication (PSC): examines the couple's general ineffectiveness in resolving differences
4. Time Together (TT): reflects a lack of common interests and dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together
5. Disagreement About Finances (FIN): assesses marital discord regarding the management of family finances
6. Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX): concerned with dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of sexual activity

Due to the limitations of the computer software used for the analysis, it was necessary to select no more than 150 items. Items from the six chosen MSI scales were examined and those items having item-scale total correlations exceeding .70 were included in the analysis resulting in 112 items.

The initial analysis examined the overall structure of the 112 items using an exploratory factor analysis procedure based on Muthen's model (1984) via the LISCOMP program. An unweighted least squares (ULS) estimator with a promax rotation was used in the analysis. Results of a scree test performed on the latent roots (i.e., eigen values) obtained from the overall analysis suggested that no more than

six factors were present. A 6-factor solution was then generated, the results of which are detailed below.

Examination of the six factors indicated a grouping of items similar to those described by the MSI scales. Items having factor loadings of .40 and above on only one factor were said to load on a particular factor. These results are summarized in Table 1. Twenty-six items were found to load on a "Global Distress" factor, 15 on a "Sexual Dissatisfaction" factor, 14 on a "Disagreement About Finances" factor, 20 on a "Problem-Solving Communication" factor, 12 on a "Time Together" factor, and 11 on an "Affective Communication" factor (see Tables 2 through 7). The first three factors only had items that matched those defined by Snyder (1981) as belonging to a particular subscale. Items loading on the final three factors also generally matched those defined by Snyder, although some items loaded significantly on a factor different than that expected. For example, while the majority of items loading on the "Problem-Solving Communication" factor were identified by Snyder as belonging to this scale, some "Global Distress" and "Affective Communication" items also loaded on this factor.

The results of this study are generally consistent with the results of previous factor analytic studies involving the MSI, and provide support as to the multidimensionality of a couple's relationship beyond a "Global Distress" factor. The emergence of several specific factors having to do with money, communication problems, sex, and time spent together, highlights a number of areas for assessment and possible intervention. Moreover, the high degree

of item overlap between the factors obtained in the present study and the largely rationally-derived subscale dimensions of the MSI lends support for the factorial validity of these scales. The results generally support the continued use of the MSI to assess various aspects of marital relationships in clinical and research settings.

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Item	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	0.699	-0.020	-0.094	-0.039	0.234	0.176
2	0.015	0.093	-0.064	0.396	0.091	0.284
7	0.127	0.837	-0.087	-0.058	0.106	-0.005
9	-0.271	0.001	-0.058	0.137	-0.626	-0.068
11	0.043	0.086	0.175	0.214	-0.048	-0.184
14	0.702	-0.006	-0.018	0.060	0.133	0.161
16	0.151	-0.033	-0.003	-0.097	0.678	0.144
18	-0.084	-0.050	-0.011	-0.819	0.027	-0.091
19	-0.031	0.130	-0.848	-0.019	0.043	-0.047
20	0.446	-0.070	-0.045	0.096	0.287	0.095
21	-0.012	-0.258	-0.023	-0.640	-0.083	-0.018
29	0.112	0.030	-0.041	-0.779	0.107	0.046
34	0.003	-0.081	0.090	-0.007	0.866	-0.042
39	-0.468	-0.003	0.012	-0.315	-0.080	-0.130
42	-0.142	0.056	-0.118	0.299	0.305	-0.064
45	-0.352	0.093	-0.047	0.112	-0.601	-0.099
49	-0.039	-0.026	-0.448	-0.017	-0.076	0.072
56	0.282	0.017	-0.125	0.682	-0.070	-0.089
57	-0.060	-0.083	-0.060	0.156	0.651	0.030
61	0.126	-0.004	0.818	0.005	-0.087	0.114
62	-0.392	-0.206	0.058	-0.076	-0.138	-0.302
65	-0.236	-0.519	0.036	0.190	-0.144	-0.143
66	-0.041	-0.081	0.013	0.458	0.097	0.331
67	0.087	0.033	-0.110	0.097	0.517	0.188
68	-0.627	-0.097	-0.072	-0.259	0.176	0.102
72	0.137	-0.002	0.482	0.241	0.050	-0.139
74	-0.052	-0.072	-0.012	-0.505	-0.015	0.044
75	-0.554	0.003	-0.010	-0.307	-0.039	-0.074
78	0.034	-0.097	0.043	-0.012	-0.064	-0.642
80	-0.656	0.094	-0.044	-0.094	-0.185	-0.058
81	-0.140	0.078	0.033	-0.641	-0.016	-0.165
82	0.052	-0.674	0.004	0.036	-0.034	0.087
85	0.221	-0.006	0.011	0.186	0.186	0.484
90	0.314	0.611	-0.115	0.018	-0.028	-0.022
92	-0.778	0.102	0.002	0.090	-0.131	0.008
93	0.162	0.063	-0.017	0.136	0.567	-0.016
94	-0.027	-0.119	-0.078	0.513	0.353	0.102
98	-0.534	-0.105	-0.085	-0.249	-0.127	0.015
99	0.133	-0.878	0.078	-0.165	-0.009	0.152
100	0.022	-0.045	0.944	-0.174	-0.044	0.183
104	-0.547	-0.024	0.056	-0.039	-0.267	-0.112
106	-0.084	0.818	0.081	-0.128	-0.009	0.126
107	-0.006	0.017	-0.571	-0.270	-0.094	0.083
109	-0.716	0.005	-0.060	-0.064	0.249	-0.225
114	0.667	-0.029	0.004	0.200	-0.096	-0.109
117	0.009	-0.034	0.942	-0.156	-0.010	0.083
119	-0.244	-0.019	0.213	-0.165	-0.395	-0.070
123	0.156	-0.135	0.056	-0.512	0.004	0.090
124	-0.028	-0.761	-0.041	-0.025	0.173	-0.227
125	-0.275	0.152	0.016	-0.499	0.006	-0.138
126	0.132	-0.129	-0.069	0.032	-0.667	-0.072
127	0.147	0.007	0.062	-0.068	0.078	0.736
129	0.061	0.036	0.013	-0.847	-0.039	0.100
130	-0.038	0.648	-0.018	0.070	0.069	0.095
131	-0.878	-0.027	0.004	0.145	-0.020	0.144
132	0.024	-0.110	0.049	-0.183	-0.001	-0.401

Table 1

Results of Factor Analysis on 112 MSI Items

133	0.002	-0.057	<u>-0.858</u>	-0.038	0.017	-0.053
136	<u>-0.667</u>	<u>-0.060</u>	0.108	-0.283	-0.056	0.024
138	0.052	<u>0.678</u>	-0.041	-0.070	0.168	-0.021
139	-0.114	0.044	0.135	<u>-0.537</u>	-0.120	-0.166
140	0.008	0.097	-0.006	<u>0.135</u>	<u>0.647</u>	-0.006
141	0.103	0.088	0.138	-0.025	0.109	<u>0.582</u>
142	-0.004	-0.003	-0.038	-0.192	-0.050	<u>-0.649</u>
144	-0.168	-0.072	0.089	0.740	0.079	-0.008
146	0.025	<u>-0.775</u>	0.002	<u>0.064</u>	-0.137	0.033
147	0.438	<u>-0.031</u>	0.006	0.286	0.180	0.128
148	<u>0.087</u>	-0.082	<u>-0.599</u>	-0.130	-0.174	0.048
152	<u>0.939</u>	-0.102	<u>-0.010</u>	-0.145	0.127	-0.212
153	<u>-0.169</u>	0.034	0.028	0.094	0.437	0.547
155	0.002	-0.043	0.012	0.161	0.211	<u>0.453</u>
156	0.162	-0.210	0.049	<u>-0.639</u>	0.034	<u>0.029</u>
159	0.115	-0.158	<u>-0.761</u>	<u>-0.074</u>	0.019	0.101
161	0.042	-0.098	<u>0.084</u>	<u>0.445</u>	0.247	0.162
162	-0.057	-0.026	0.015	<u>-0.039</u>	<u>0.730</u>	-0.045
163	0.323	-0.030	0.155	<u>0.398</u>	-0.024	0.184
164	-0.161	-0.064	-0.101	0.077	-0.044	<u>-0.538</u>
168	<u>0.801</u>	0.063	0.092	-0.107	-0.023	-0.007
172	<u>-0.094</u>	0.001	<u>-0.653</u>	0.017	-0.043	0.101
174	<u>0.533</u>	0.173	<u>-0.023</u>	0.341	-0.124	0.020
179	<u>0.593</u>	0.049	0.029	0.142	0.152	0.039
182	<u>-0.073</u>	-0.030	0.084	<u>0.623</u>	0.019	0.238
184	0.097	0.008	0.018	<u>-0.165</u>	<u>0.708</u>	0.088
185	<u>0.811</u>	-0.046	0.129	<u>-0.149</u>	<u>0.121</u>	0.133
187	<u>-0.187</u>	0.116	0.054	<u>-0.663</u>	-0.093	-0.126
188	-0.167	<u>-0.880</u>	-0.093	0.103	0.110	0.032
190	-0.005	-0.030	<u>-0.623</u>	-0.047	0.038	0.093
191	<u>0.463</u>	0.062	<u>0.034</u>	0.299	-0.161	-0.012
192	0.114	0.006	-0.195	-0.085	-0.100	<u>-0.518</u>
195	-0.044	0.064	0.006	<u>-0.723</u>	0.094	-0.044
196	-0.215	0.050	0.007	<u>-0.762</u>	0.158	0.029
197	0.141	-0.733	0.032	<u>-0.024</u>	0.121	-0.251
198	0.091	<u>0.035</u>	0.061	0.208	0.073	<u>0.567</u>
200	0.097	0.008	<u>-0.666</u>	-0.202	-0.105	0.038
201	0.017	0.152	0.004	0.264	<u>0.387</u>	-0.065
202	-0.073	0.106	-0.012	-0.077	<u>-0.503</u>	-0.086
203	<u>0.521</u>	-0.003	0.003	0.316	<u>0.143</u>	0.077
206	0.100	<u>0.537</u>	-0.093	0.100	0.144	-0.187
209	<u>-0.740</u>	<u>-0.071</u>	-0.019	-0.002	-0.080	0.300
212	<u>0.158</u>	-0.020	-0.108	-0.047	<u>0.682</u>	0.225
216	<u>-0.621</u>	-0.089	0.012	-0.133	<u>-0.141</u>	-0.064
221	<u>-0.827</u>	-0.002	0.042	-0.008	-0.044	-0.200
223	<u>0.032</u>	0.032	<u>0.853</u>	-0.148	0.015	0.176
224	-0.185	<u>0.728</u>	0.038	-0.014	-0.239	0.286
225	-0.114	0.121	0.013	<u>-0.676</u>	-0.035	-0.023
226	0.161	-0.034	-0.067	<u>0.355</u>	-0.311	0.348
230	0.023	0.030	-0.005	0.355	-0.056	0.358
231	<u>-0.762</u>	0.023	-0.056	-0.142	0.097	-0.141
232	<u>-0.007</u>	-0.033	-0.289	-0.198	-0.306	0.007
233	0.009	<u>0.925</u>	0.083	-0.005	0.000	-0.000
236	0.009	<u>-0.048</u>	0.005	-0.050	-0.379	-0.576
238	0.276	0.100	0.023	-0.074	0.353	<u>0.411</u>
239	<u>0.619</u>	0.059	0.068	0.072	0.052	<u>0.233</u>
	GD	SEX	FIN	PSC	TT	AFC

Note. Underlined values indicate factor on which the items load.

Table 1

Continued

FACTOR 1: GLOBAL DISTRESS

Item	Loading
1. I believe our marriage is reasonably happy.	.699
2. I am quite happily married.	.702
30. I have never felt better in my marriage than I do now.	.446
39. Two married persons should be able to get along better than my mate and I.	-.468
68. I have wondered, on several occasions, whether my marriage would end in divorce.	-.627
75. My marriage has been disappointing in several ways.	-.554
80. There are some serious difficulties in our marriage.	-.656
92. The future of our marriage is too uncertain to make any serious plans.	-.778
98. My marriage is less happy than the very successful ones.	-.534
104. Even when I am with my spouse I feel lonely much of the time.	-.547
109. The unhappiest moments of my life are often caused by my marriage.	-.716
114. I have never felt our marital difficulties were piling up so high that we could not overcome them.	.667
131. I might be happier if I weren't married.	-.878
136. I get pretty discouraged about my marriage sometimes.	-.667
147. My spouse and I are happier than most couples I know.	.438
152. I am thoroughly committed to remaining in my present marriage.	.939
168. I am certain our decision to get married was the right one.	.801
174. I have known very little unhappiness in my marriage.	.533
179. My marriage is as successful as any I know.	.593
185. The good things in my marriage seem to far outweigh the bad.	.811
191. My spouse and I have never come close to separation or divorce.	.463
203. I believe that our marriage is as pleasant as that of most people I know.	.521
209. If it weren't for fear of hurting my mate, I might leave him (her).	-.740
216. I think my marriage is less happy than most marriages.	-.621
221. My marriage is an unhappy one.	-.827
231. Frankly, our marriage has not been successful.	-.762
239. My marriage has been very satisfying.	.619

Table 2. Items Loading on Factor 1

FACTOR 2: SEXUAL DISSATISFACTION

Item		Loading
7.	Our sex life is entirely satisfactory.	.837
65.	My spouse and I rarely have sexual intercourse.	-.519
82.	My spouse is sometimes overly modest or prudish in his(her) attitude toward sex.	-.674
90.	I nearly always gain complete sexual satisfaction from intercourse with my spouse.	.611
99.	I would like to improve the quality of our sexual relationship.	-.878
106.	My spouse seems to enjoy sex as much as I do.	.818
124.	My spouse has too little regard sometimes for my sexual satisfaction.	-.761
130.	My spouse and I nearly always agree on how frequently to have intercourse.	.648
138.	Our sexual relationship does not lack at all in variety.	.678
146.	I am somewhat dissatisfied with how my spouse and I talk about better ways of pleasing each other sexually.	-.775
188.	I am sometimes unhappy with our sexual relationship.	-.880
197.	My spouse sometimes shows too little enthusiasm for sex.	-.733
206.	Talking about sexual performance with my spouse is not difficult.	.537
224.	My spouse rarely refuses intercourse when I desire it.	.728
233.	There is nothing I would like to change about our sex life.	.925

Table 3. Items Loading on Factor 2

FACTOR 3: DISAGREEMENT ABOUT FINANCES

Item		Loading
19.	My spouse has no common sense when it comes to money.	-.848
49.	I feel as though we outlive our financial means.	-.448
61.	I trust my spouse with our money completely.	.818
72.	My spouse and I rarely argue about money.	.482
100.	My spouse is pretty good when it comes to saving money.	.944
107.	It is often hard for my spouse and me to discuss our finances without getting upset with each other.	-.571
117.	My spouse is a very good manager of finances.	.942
133.	My spouse doesn't seem to understand the importance of putting money into savings.	-.858
148.	Trying to work out a family budget makes more trouble with my spouse than it is worth.	-.599
159.	My spouse doesn't always appreciate the importance of keeping good financial records.	-.761
172.	My spouse sometimes buys too much on credit.	-.653
190.	My spouse has much difficulty keeping our checkbook balanced.	-.623
200.	My spouse buys too many things without consulting with me first.	-.666
223.	My spouse invests money wisely.	.853

Table 4. Items Loading on Factor 3

FACTOR 4: PROBLEM-SOLVING COMMUNICATION

Item		Loading
2.	My spouse almost always responds with understanding to my mood at a given moment.	.396
18.	My spouse and I need to improve the way we settle our differences.	-.819
21.	Sometimes my spouse just can't understand the way I feel.	-.640
29.	Our arguments often end with an exchange of insults.	-.779
56.	My mate and I seldom have major disagreements.	.682
66.	When my spouse and I disagree, my spouse helps us to find alternatives acceptable to both of us.	.458
74.	My spouse is so touchy on some subjects that I can't even mention them.	-.505
81.	My spouse often fails to understand my point of view on things.	-.641
94.	When my spouse and I have differences of opinion, we sit down and discuss them.	.513
123.	I sometimes am reluctant to express disagreement with my spouse for fear that he/she will get angry.	-.512
125.	My spouse and I argue nearly all the time.	-.499
129.	Minor disagreements with my spouse often end up in big arguments.	-.847
139.	My spouse and I seem able to go for days sometimes without settling our differences.	-.537
144.	When arguing, we manage quite well to restrict our focus to the important issues.	.740
156.	My spouse often complains that I don't understand him/her.	-.639
161.	In most matters, my spouse understands what I'm trying to say.	.445
163.	My mate rarely does things which make me unhappy.	.398
182.	Even when angry with me, my spouse is able to appreciate my viewpoints.	.623
187.	A lot of our arguments seem to end in depressing stalemates.	-.663
195.	Our arguments frequently end up with one of us feeling hurt or crying.	-.723
196.	We seem to do more arguing than a couple should.	-.762
225.	We sometimes seem unable to settle calmly even our minor differences.	-.676

Table 5. Items Loading on Factor 4

FACTOR 5: TIME TOGETHER

Item	Loading
9. My spouse and I don't have much in common to talk about.	-.626
16. My spouse and I enjoy doing things together.	.678
34. My spouse and I spend a good deal of time together in many different kinds of play and recreation.	.866
45. My spouse and I seem to have little in common when we are not busy with social activities.	-.601
57. My spouse and I frequently sit down and talk about pleasant things that have happened during the day.	.651
57. I am fairly satisfied with the way my spouse and I spend our available free time.	.517
93. Our daily life is full of interesting things to do together.	.567
119. It seems that we used to have more fun than we do now.	-.395
126. I wish my spouse shared a few more of my interests.	-.667
140. The recreational and leisure life of my spouse and myself appears to be meeting both our needs quite well.	.647
162. My spouse and I enjoy the same types of amusement.	.730
184. I spend at least one hour each day in an activity with my spouse.	.708
201. During our marriage, my spouse and I have always talked things over.	.387
202. About the only time I'm with my spouse is at meals and bedtime.	-.503
212. My spouse and I sometimes enjoy just sitting down and doing things together.	.682

Table 6. Items Loading on Factor 5

FACTOR 6: AFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Item	Loading
78. It is unusual for my spouse to openly express strong feelings of tenderness.	-.642
85. Whenever I'm feeling sad, my spouse makes me feel loved and happy again.	.484
127. My spouse does many different things to show me that he/she loves me.	.736
132. Sometimes I feel as though my spouse doesn't really need me.	-.401
141. My spouse does many things to please me.	.582
142. Sometimes I wonder just how much my spouse really does love me.	-.649
155. Whenever he/she is feeling down, my spouse comes to me for support.	.453
164. I'm not sure my spouse has ever really loved me.	-.538
192. My spouse sometimes seems to spend more time with his/her friends than with me.	-.518
198. Just when I need it the most, my spouse makes me feel important.	.567
236. My spouse seems to enjoy just being with me.	-.576
238. There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our marriage.	.411

Table 7. Items Loading on Factor 6